DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 306 180 SO 019 862

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TITLE Education for Peace.
PUB DATE 24 Apr 88
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the World Peace Council and UNESCO International Encounter for Peace, Disarmament, and Life (Merida, Venezuela, April 19-24, 1988).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Improvement; *Educational Responsibility; Educational Theories; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Peace; *Social Bias; *Social Change; Social Discrimination; Social Theories; *War; World Problems
IDENTIFIERS Peace Education; Peace Studies

ABSTRACT

Peace is one of the greatest needs in the world today. Until the causes of war are addressed, there can be no peace. Education, justice, and unity are the building blocks to peace and the necessary conditions for its existence. Achieving a peaceful world depends upon our willingness and efforts to remove those things that lead to war and to replace them with the things that lead to peace. Prejudice is the root cause of war and education is the means of overcoming it. Prejudice is the result of self-centeredness and blind imitation. The aggressive and selfish qualities of our past must be replaced by the more mature qualities of cooperation and reciprocity. Five prejudices deserve special attention and are discussed because of the untold suffering they have inflicted upon the world and because of their importance in establishing peace. They are racism, nationalism, classism, sexism, and religious prejudice. Education can help to eliminate these prejudices by teaching the truth instead of continuing to propagate them. Educators must teach the fallacies and harmful effects of these prejudices which, like war, are supported by lies, irrationalities, fear, and ignorance. The first step is to eliminate these prejudices from oneself, then one can influence others. Eleven ideas to aid in this process are presented. Models of curriculum and instruction that further the concepts of justice, unity, and peace are necessary. Education, both formal and informal, is the best means for creating the knowledge and attitude needed for peace. The inspiration obtained from the Baha'i and other writings in the preparation of this paper is acknowledged. (GEA)

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EDUCATION FOR PEACE

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SO 019 062

Paper presented at the World Peace Council and UNESCO International Encounter for Peace, Disarmament and Life
Merida, Venezuela
April 19-24

Abstract

Peace is one of the greatest needs in the world today. Until the causes of war are addressed, peace will not be realized. Wars are caused by prejudice, injustice and disunity. Education is the primary means of overcoming prejudice. The most harmful prejudices--racism, nationalism, classism, sexism, and religious prejudice--are examined and ways of dealing with these prejudices presented.

EDUCATION FOR PEACE

Rodney H. Clarken

War is a disease in the body of humanity. Until we are willing to deal with the true causes of this disease--prejudice, injustice and disunity--no true healing will occur. These causes include such things as misguided religious beliefs, unbridled nationalism, cancerous materialism and anachronistic prejudices. Some, viewing the present state of affairs, have given up the hope that humanity will change. Others have the hope, but have no idea about how to change this world of war into a world of peace. Still others attempt solutions that are neither broad enough, nor deep enough to produce the necessary transformation.

Before there can be peace, there must be unity, and before there can be unity, there must be justice, and before there can be justice, the people must be educated. Education, justice, and unity are the building blocks to peace and the necessary conditions for peace to exist. Stated another way, the root causes of war or the diseases afflicting the body of humanity that prevent us from having a healthy and peaceful world are prejudice resulting for either a lack of education or mis-education, injustice based upon greed and prejudice, and disunity based upon prejudice, injustice and fear. Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchical relationship between the ailments that cause war and the remedies for those ailments.

WAR / PEACE
Disunity / Unity
Injustice / Justice
Prejudices / Education

Figure 1. Causes of War / Prescription for Peace

Our achieving a peaceful world depends upon our willingness and efforts to remove those things that lead to war and to replace them with those things that lead to peace. Prejudice is the root cause of war and education is the means of overcoming prejudice. The major prejudices that cause wars

and how educations can address those prejudices and establish the foundations for peace are discussed below.

Prejudice

Prejudice is a natural weakness in the body of humanity. It is the result of two main causes: self-centeredness and blind imitation.

Self-centeredness is a natural trait in all of us. It plays an important role in our survival and development, but unless it is controlled, it can be destructive. This self-centeredness causes us to value ourselves more than others, therefore people who are different from us tend to be looked upon as inferior. This leads to prejudice.

Blind imitation of practices and beliefs is the second major cause of prejudice. People tend to believe and do what others believe and do without much thought about their beliefs or actions. Much of the prejudice that exists in the world is the result of this blind imitation.

There are several prejudices or erroneous views that prevent the realization of justice, unity, and peace. One of the first prejudices to be overcome is the belief that justice, unity, and peace are not possible. It is said that we have always had wars, will always have wars and that we are inherently selfish and aggressive. These conceptions must be examined, because without resolving them, our hopes and efforts for building a peaceful world will be paralyzed.

If we take a developmental view of the progress of humanity throughout history, we will have a framework for understanding why, although our past has been filled with wars, our present stage of development should be characterized by peace. In much the same way that individuals experience successive stages of growth and development, humanity has gone through the stages of infancy, childhood and adolescence, and is now entering the stage of adulthood.

The aggressive and selfish qualities that characterized our earlier stages of development must be cast aside for the more mature qualities of cooperation and reciprocity characteristic of the adult level of development. Understanding history according to the developmental view of the human race should help us in our process of enabling this world of conflict and egocentrism to become a world of peace and unity.

Most Harmful Prejudices

All prejudices are harmful, but five prejudices deserve special attention because of the untold suffering they have inflicted upon the world and because of their importance in establishing peace. The five most harmful prejudices are racism, nationalism, classism, sexism, and religious prejudice. Most people acknowledge that these prejudices are wrong, but few people have been able to rid themselves of them.

Racism

Racism is one of the worst and longest standing of these prejudices. Racism is the belief that one race is superior to another. This belief legitimizes unfair treatment of the so-called inferior race and division between the races. Progress in eliminating this evil has been made during the past few decades. The current outrage concerning racist practices in the world is a sign of this growing awareness. Racist policies and practices which have been existing for centuries have largely been discredited in this day and laws and institutions have been established to overcome the past inequities. Racism not only harms those who are oppressed by it, but also has a deleterious affect on the oppressors. It divides humanity unjustly without scientific or moral foundation and leads to conflict.

Nationalism

The second structure and attitude that must be adjusted is that of excessive nationalism. Loyalty to one's country is important, but it need not be the cause of prejudice, hatred, or war. Like all loyalties, national loyalty need not exclude broader, more inclusive loyalties, such as loyalty to the world.

Nationalistic practices that were acceptable and necessary previously, are dangerous and inappropriate at this stage of development. Through advances in science and technology, particularly in transportation and communications, the planet has become a global village. Every nation is connected and interdependent with every other nation. The very concept of

nationhood must be called into question in this age when the changing conditions call for a world view and cooperation, instead of the current antagonistic and self-centered approaches.

Classism

Classism is another major barrier to peace. The gross inequities that presently exist between the higher and lower classes create a condition that is unlikely to allow peace. The extremes of wealth and poverty create instability, suffering and injustice on a level that is unacceptable. We cannot expect the poor and deprived of the world to passively sit by without food and the basic necessities while the rich have more than they need or can use. Nor can we continue to expect the lower classes to continue to receive unfair treatment in society without more opportunity and justice being given to them.

Sexism

The fourth social structure that creates a barrier to peace is sexism. Sexism, like racism, is based on genetic physical characteristics associated with inferiority. Male-dominated institutions throughout the ages have encouraged this prejudice. Sexism is an injustice to one-half of the world's population that is being eradicated much too slowly. Only as women are accepted into full partnership with men will the attitudes of society be balanced enough to allow the consciousness of peace to emerge.

Religious Prejudice

The final major prejudice that must be overcome in our effort for peace is that of religious prejudice. Religion has had a far-reaching and enduring influence on humanity and the development of civilizations. It is paradoxical that the same religions that have been the cause of the advancement of individual and collective development should also be the cause of blocking that development at another stage. The same religious institutions which are based love and peace have been the cause of so much hatred and war.

Religious leaders of today tend to propagate prejudice in their followers and allow minor differences to become the cause of disunity.

Education to Eliminate Prejudice

Education can help to eliminate these prejudices by teaching the truth instead of continuing to propagate these prejudices. Instead of teaching a misleading view of human nature, the evolving nature of human development and history can be taught. Instead of promoting one race over another, one nation over another, one class over another, one sex over another, or one religion over another, we can raise the consciousness and conscience of our students to the point that these ideas will no longer be acceptable. We can teach world unity instead of world divisiveness, peace instead of war, love instead of hate, cooperation instead of antagonism, and peaceful resolution of problems instead of violent confrontation.

Most education promotes war instead of peace, pits white against black, haves against have nots, nation against nation, boys against girls, and believers against non-believers. We cannot expect a world of peace to result from this type of education. These prejudices and practices, like war, are supported by lies, irrationalities, fear and ignorance wherewith we have entrapped ourselves. We must teach the fallacies and harmful effects of these prejudices. Education can no longer serve the selfish and limited interests of one group over another.

The consciousness and conscience of the world is developing to the point where it will no longer tolerate prejudice, injustice and war. These things have been with us throughout history, but the general sense that they are no longer acceptable is a recent development. The growth of peace movements, the increased awareness and concern for social justice, and the advances made in world unity and order are all signs of this change - the coming of age of humanity. These signs all are indicative of the readiness of humankind to receive the education needed to rid themselves of the causes of war.

The first step in this process is to eliminate these prejudices from ourselves. It is one thing to sign petitions, participate in demonstrations, or even to teach what is right, but it is another change our own harmful attitudes and practices. Only when we have successfully dealt with these

problems within ourselves, will we be able to positively influence those around us.

The elimination of prejudice in ourselves and others involves a change in how we see ourselves and others, how we feel about ourselves and others, and how we act toward ourselves and others. In education these three areas are called the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Until we can acknowledge that we have prejudices, we will not be able to effectively deal with them. Seeing things differently can lead to feeling differently about them, and ultimately, to putting our new knowledge and attitudes into action.

Some ideas to aid in this process of change are listed below.

1. Recognize you own prejudices.
2. Examine how your thoughts and feelings have been influenced by selfishness and blind imitation.
3. Examine how your thoughts and feelings have been influenced by others' prejudices.
4. Understand how prejudices develop and the harm they produce.
5. Identify individual and institutional practices that propagate prejudice.
6. Practice freedom from prejudice in your daily activities.
7. Make goals and plans to eliminate prejudice in yourself and society.
8. Empathize with others.
9. Respect yourself and others.
10. Recognize the essential oneness of humankind.
11. Appreciate unity in diversity.

An institutional step towards eliminating prejudice would to be to reduce the inequities that exist in educational opportunity. The discriminated races, religions, classes, sex, and ethnic groups have achieved greater and greater equity of educational opportunity. We must consciously move this process to its final stage of equal opportunity for all peoples.

We must also look for models of curriculum and instruction that further the concepts of justice, unity and peace. Materials and practices that view humanity as a cooperative and evolving, that eliminate prejudice and injustice, and that foster world citizenship should be used in the classrooms throughout the world.

Conclusion

World peace is imminent. It is the hallmark of humanity's adulthood. The process by which we reach this level of development is yet to be seen. We can continue our present adolescent behavior in this world of adult needs and responsibilities until we destroy the world, or we can address the needs and responsibilities of this adult age in a more mature fashion to bring about the justice and peace for which we are all longing.

Education can play a leading role in assisting humanity to make the right choice by developing this desire for peace and by teaching how peace can be achieved. Peace has more to do with raising the consciousness and conscience of the people than with the signing of treaties or the limiting of arms. Education, both formal and informal, is the best means for creating the knowledge and attitude needed for peace. Establishing peace in the world is primarily a process of changing how we think about peace, which will affect how we feel about peace, and ultimately guide our actions to creating peace.

Author Notes

I would like to acknowledge the influence *The Promise of World Peace* by The Universal House of Justice and the Baha'i writings have had in inspiring the thoughts presented in this paper.